

## Central region connections lead to a life-long commitment for injured youth

Life in Quincy was hard on Jay as a young child. A recreational program led him to the path of Kim, a college student who wanted to help children. What could have been a brief acquaintance turned into a lifetime commitment at a time when he needed it the most.

Jay was 10 years old in 1992 when he and his three brothers came into care for neglect and abuse. Jay was initially placed in a foster home in Champaign, Illinois. He was having extensive behavior problems and had to be moved several times. Jay met Kim through a sports camp fund-ed through the University of Illinois. When Jay suddenly stop-ped attending, she got involved. She discovered that he was having trouble in his placements and she wanted to help. Kim enrolled as a mentor with the Children's Home and Aide Society and was assigned to Jay. As a mentor, Kim took Jay to various sports activities, helped him with tutoring and just encouraged him.

Kim graduated from the U of I, and moved back to the Chicago

area to pursue her career in education, while Jay moved to the Chaddock Home for Boys. Kim maintained contact with Jay. They visited at least twice a year, at Christmas and on Jay's birthday in August. He became an active teenager who was involved in sports, had a job and was working toward graduation. Kim and Jay planned for him to graduate from high school in Quincy and then go to live with Kim and her family in Chicago. Jay planned to continue his education at a junior college in the Chicago area. It was a great plan, until fate intervened.

Shortly before the start of his senior year, Jay was playing outdoors with other residents. He started to do a flip in the air and changed his mind. He landed on his neck and sustained a spinal injury. Jay was considered to be quadriplegic and was bound to a wheelchair. He transferred to the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago so that he could be close to Kim and her family. Kim would make almost daily visits from the



*Kim met Jay when she was a U of I student volunteer with a youth program. Through Jay's many foster care moves and a serious injury, she kept the connection and became his caregiver. Pictured here at her wedding, Jay is thriving in her family.*

south side of Chicago to the north side while Jay recuperated. Jay was home-schooled and was able to earn credits toward his high school graduation. He attended his high school graduation in Quincy in June 2002 with the help of Kim, her family and community resources.

During the time that Jay was hospitalized, Kim involved herself in training to help meet his complex medical needs. She bought a

*Continued on Page 2*

## Connections, con't.

home that could be handicapped accessible and by Christmas, 2002, Jay moved in. The following fall, Jay enrolled in a community college and continues his studies, taking nine hours this semester. He has a computer that is modified for his limited hand/arm movement, so he is able to email and use the computer for his education.

Back in the early 1990's, Kim was a young college student who was determined to help make a better life for Jay. Kim has given Jay the love and nurturing far beyond anyone's expectations. Despite the challenges he has had to overcome during his young life, he is a pleasant, social young man who is finally "home."

### Central Connections

#### Sponsor

Robert Blackwell, DCFS  
Central Regional Administrator

#### Regional Reporter

Mary Bullock  
2001 N.E. Jefferson St.  
Peoria, IL 61603  
Phone: 309-671-7900  
Fax: 309-671-7906  
E-mail:  
MBullock@idcfs.state.il.us

Anyone can call the regional reporter with foster parent association news and schedules; local training notices; features on foster families and community members working for children; photos; and ideas for news articles or supportive services that would be helpful for caregivers to know.

## Central region resource fairs

The Central Region hosted three days of Resource Fairs in Peoria, Champaign and Springfield. The fairs each had a vast array of booths where community providers could educate DCFS staff on their programs. The providers who came together included resources for medical needs, domestic violence interventions and community and county-based services.

This was the first year that the fairs were sponsored. Jane Norman, site manager of the Rock Island office, was the leader. She was assisted by Local Area Network (LAN) liaisons from DCFS, community providers and LAN leaders and other agency support staff.

Among the wealth of valuable information, presentations on programs to prevent truancy, suspension and expulsion from schools were of special interest. As part of a new initiative started in July, community agencies have developed a variety of programs to keep at-risk youth in school and provide support to families.

For more information about educational and other community-based resources, contact your caseworker first. Judy Rehder of DCFS can offer more specific information about the LAN providers and the DCFS LAN liaisons assigned to specific geographic areas. She is in the Cambridge Field Office and can be reached at 309-937-1071.

## Central region families and staff celebrate Halloween



*Michelle Ross And Stacey Lankster of the DCFS Charelston office helped make Halloween special for foster families. The fun included competitions for decorations, food and costumes.*



*Bloomington staff coordinated its 12th annual party. More than 150 children and their foster parents enjoyed pizza, candy and games, all compliments of staff donations.*

## Central Region completes 2006 Foster Parent Law implementation plan

The task heated up during the summer, and after several months of diligent work, the Central Region submitted its Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan. The plan reflects how the region's foster care program will address each of the rights and responsibilities embodied in the Foster Parent Law.

The region kicked off work on the implementation plan by attending a training presented by the Office of Foster Parent Support Services. DCFS, along with private agency staff, learned more about how plans are scored and how the plans will be monitored. Mary White, one of Central Region's representatives to the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council, attended the training and stayed involved with crafting this year's plan. The Council, with help from DCFS is responsible for reviewing each implementation plan and scoring it in accordance to the Foster Parent Law.

Everyone focused in on last year's scores and areas that needed some fine-tuning. Financial support is one area the region is addressing through training and a commitment to process requests in a timely manner. Training was also an important item. The private agencies and DCFS are currently implementing a program improvement plan that was pre-

sented in September. That improvement plan will support training over a six-month period. Some of the training topics will be family meetings and service planning, supporting education and well-being for children, and including foster parents in case management.

The creation of the new Implementation Plan included several rounds of input and review. Each of the local offices was asked to review the previous year's plan in meetings with foster parents. Staff asked for their input on what needed improvement and what they would like to see happen to improve communication. The draft was then sent out to all of the DCFS offices for a 30-day comment period. The draft also was presented to the Central Region foster parent support groups, and individual foster parents were asked for input. The focus was on getting the plan out to everyone and ensuring that all foster parents know how to contact the supervisor and manager to address issues.

The final draft was delivered to the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council in November. The Council will do the scoring and make comments. The results will be announced in the first quarter of 2006. Copies of the plan are available at the local field offices.

## A message from your regional administrator

Central Region's caregivers provide the greatest gift of all. Your act of love and perseverance is changing the lives of children now and in the future. I



*Robert T. Blackwell*

recently marked my first anniversary as your Regional Administrator, and I am still humbled by all you do. Without the foster and adoptive parents, guardians, and relatives who step up and fill in, we could not function.

The Central Region administration is working hard to ensure the highest level of service to the youth in our care and the families who take care of them. We have examined our structure and are making changes as needed. We recently submitted our Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan. Many caregivers helped draft the plan. We are grateful for your input to a plan that we hope will help us help you.

As we approach 2006, please take encouragement in knowing that my entire staff and I are looking for ways we can continue to grow in our service and commitment. Best wishes to you and yours for a blessed holiday season and New Year.

Robert T. Blackwell  
Regional Administrator



# Central Region Training Calendar

## FosterPRIDE In-Service Training

**Peoria Area**  
**888-507-7433**

**Module 2 - Using Discipline to Protect, Nurture and Meet Developmental Needs**  
(Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

**PEORIA Lutheran Social Services**  
Jan. 26, (Thu)  
Feb. 2 & 9 6-9 p.m.

**Module 7 - Promoting Children's Personal and Cultural Identity**  
(Two 3-hour sessions=6 training hours)

**ROCK ISLAND BHC Tech Ctr.**  
Feb. 27 & 5:45-8:45 p.m.  
March 6 (Mon)

## Educational Advocacy

Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours

It is mandatory for one foster parent in each family to attend Educational Advocacy Training in order to be re-licensed. Educational Advocacy Training is offered following each Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE training and many additional times. This six-hour course covers information foster parents need to know so that they can advocate for their foster children's educational rights and needs.

**Peoria Area**  
**888-507-7433**

**LaSALLE Public Housing Authority**  
March 22 & 29 (Wed) 6-9 p.m.

**PEORIA Children's Home**  
Jan. 25 & Feb 1 (Wed) 6-9 p.m.

**PEORIA Valeska Hinton Early Childhood Education Ctr.**  
March 27 & April 3 (Mon) 6-9 p.m.

**ROCK ISLAND BHC Tech Center**  
Jan. 23 & 30 (Mon) 5:45-8:45 p.m.

## Integrated Assessment Training

**Peoria Area**  
**888-507-7433**

**PEORIA Valeska Hinton Early Childhood Education Center**  
March 2 (Thu) 6:30-8:30 p.m.

**Springfield Area**  
**217-786-2458**

**SPRINGFIELD Lincoln Land**  
March 7 (Tue) 6:30-8:30 p.m.

**Champaign Area**  
**217-355-4644**

**CHAMPAIGN Parkland College**  
March 18 (Sat) 9:30-11:30 a.m.

## Non-PRIDE Inservice Training

**Peoria Area**  
**888-507-7433**

**Special Education of Children in Foster Care**

**EAST MOLINE BHC Outreach Ctr.**  
Jan. 25 (Wed) 6:30-8:30 p.m.

**Oppositional Defiant Disorder: What is it and What can I do?**

**MACOMB First Pres. Church**  
March 7 (Tue) 6:30-8:30 p.m.

**Champaign Area**  
**217-355-4644**

**Please Talk to Me and Read to Me**

**CHAMPAIGN Illinois Terminal Ctr.**  
Feb. 18 (Sat) 10-11:30 a.m.

**Effects on Children Living with Substance Abusers**

**CHAMPAIGN Parkland Campus**  
Feb. 20 (Mon) 6:30-8:30 p.m.

**Springfield Area**  
**217-786-2458**

**Educational Services & Rehabilitation Act 504: Who is Covered?**

**QUINCY Blessing Hospital**  
Feb. 4 (Sat) 10-11:30 a.m.

**Domestic Violence 101**

**JACKSONVILLE Lincoln Land**  
Jan. 21 (Sat) 9:30-11:30 a.m.

**SPRINGFIELD Lincoln Land**  
Jan. 21 (Sat) 9:30-11:30 a.m.

**Asthma 101: The Basics**

**JACKSONVILLE Lincoln Land**  
March 9 (Thu) 6:30-8 p.m.

**SPRINGFIELD Lincoln Land**  
Feb. 7 (Tue) 6:30-8 p.m.

**Champaign Area**  
**217-355-4644**

**NORMAL BabyFold**  
Jan. 17 & 24 (Tue) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

**CHAMPAIGN Parkland College**  
March 13 & 20 (Mon) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

**CHARLESTON Coles County Ctr. for Human Services**  
March 27 & (Mon) 6:30-9:30 p.m.  
April 3

**Springfield Area**  
**217-786-2458**

**JACKSONVILLE Lincoln Land**  
Jan. 28 (Sat) 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

**QUINCY Blessing Hospital**  
Feb. 18 & 25 (Sat) 1:30-4:30 p.m.

**SPRINGFIELD Lincoln Land**  
Jan. 14 (Sat) 9 a.m.-4 p.m.  
March 24 & 31 (Fri) 6:30-9:30 p.m.